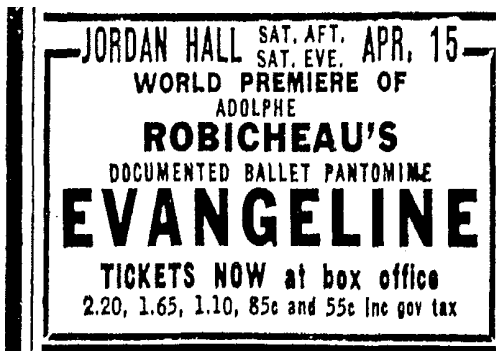




Evangeline - The Ballet

Boston, 1939: *"She was light as a feather. What a wonderful partner!"* For the French-American dancer Adolphe Robicheau, his ballet *Evangeline* was a masterpiece. "His eyes lit up at a photograph of him and Evelyn in their Acadian costumes," according to Lorita's unpublished memoirs.

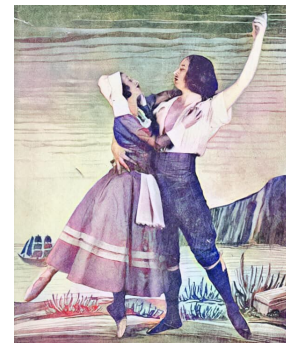


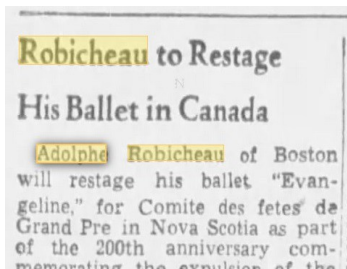
The two-performance premiere took place at Jordan Hall, Boston, on April 15, 1939. The ballet-pantomime consisted of four scenes: the engagement, Grand Pré, the expulsion, and Louisiana Bayous. Adolphe, aged 33, played Gabriel and Evelyn Ford Galvin played *Evangeline*. They are supported by Arthur Vaillancourt, Elizabeth Doucette and the dancers of the Académie Robicheau. The music is by Xavier Leroux and the set is by Richard deFole.

The Boston newspapers praised and reviewed it. "A narrator read the Longfellow poem, the music was specially written and there were several scene changes. The production was clearly a lot of work, the sets were quite elaborate, the lighting was of the classical school and the costumes were numerous and colourful. Many Acadian country items, inherited from Mr. Robicheau's family, added a touch of authenticity," said a Boston Globe reporter.

The Boston Herald said, "Poor *Evangeline*! Poor Ballet! They both suffered yesterday afternoon in the clutches of clumsy dancers. The technique amounted to poor posture, lack of a good ballet line, loose choreography and very sloppy execution. Mr. Robicheau himself can't dance and the postures, which were supposed to pass for dance, were very un-theatrical... honestly, it was terrible!"

Criticism did not extinguish his passion. In 1944 he set up his dance studio at Appleton Manor: Fanny Longfellow's childhood home. There he decided to remake two scenes from the ballet. These pieces were included in the programme of the annual dance festival in 1946.





In 1955, the Boston newspapers rejoiced - *Evangeline for Canada!* According to Robicheau, he was the guest of the Grand-Pré committee as part of the bicentennial commemoration. Although this information appeared in the Boston circulars, it is probably not very accurate.

Instead, he presents "The Legend of Clare" as part of the Clare Bicentennial. With a cast of over 300, it was the largest pageant of its kind in Baie Sainte Marie. There remains a living memory. The pageant programme confirms this, choreography inspired by his ballet, and a photo of Adolphe and Evelyn Ford Galvin appears after the text. Ambiguity in the Boston papers or shattered dreams in Grand-Pré? ... in Baie Sainte Marie, he was a superstar!

Failed revival in 1960: In a fit of nostalgia, Adolphe decided to tour his *Evangeline* in Nova Scotia. He organized a costume ball at the Vendome Hotel in Boston to raise funds. Aesthetically, the event was a success; some consuls and politicians were in attendance. Despite this, the ball only made thirty dollars. Undaunted, Robicheau sent a letter to College Sainte Anne, offering a cast of six for a ballet program and a production of *Evangeline*. "They still don't have shows like we can do," Adolphe reasoned. When the acceptance came, four dancers rebelled and refused to be burdened by what they saw as an ego trip. Dancer Lou Labidini argues that if he were to dance for free, he would do so at a Boston campus where he would be equally appreciated. Robicheau is devastated by the mutiny. "It's obvious I'm not the master here anymore," he says.



Adolphe Robicheau, French-American dancer, who is presenting a new program of dances at the Repertory Theater on Saturday evening.

The *Festival Acadien de Clare* agreed to pay the airfare for Adolphe and Lorita (Lorraine Ash) in 1961. Excerpts from the ballet were presented, as well as some Spanish dances.

In her manuscript, she says, "The auditorium was full and the audience flooded us with applause. He had planned to dance three numbers; I convinced him to do five. At the party afterwards in his carefully restored museum, *La Vieille Maison*, it became clear why he loved this Acadia and its people so much"

The last presentation was on August 15, 1976 at the Massachusetts Bicentennial at the Massachusetts State House. The Acadian costumes worn thirty years earlier by the cast were sought after for the half-dozen girls in the roles of the heroine and her friends. This was a final visit with a much-loved role, a final reunion. Adolphe's sisters were present, as were Elizabeth Doucette and Arthur Vaillancourt. Sitting nearby was ballerina Evelyn Ford Galvin.

Gabriel was now an old man in his seventies. Adolphe Robicheau died two years later.

EVANGELINE BALLET HERE APRIL 15

On Saturday afternoon and evening, April 15, in Jordan Hall, Adolphe Robicheau, dancer, will be assisted by his concert group in "Evangeline." This is a documented ballet-pantomime in three acts and six scenes based on Longfellow's poem of the same name. The choreography is by Robicheau, the music from a score of Xavier Leroux, heard for the first time in this country. "Evangeline" is scheduled to be presented with authenticity of background and costume by this well-known French dancer.

phase of the evening's discussions.

ROBICHEAU PRESENTS EVANGELINE BALLET

Adolphe Robicheau, the Acadian-born dancer, has turned to the heritage of his people for the theme of his new ballet. Based on Longfellow's great epic, Mr. Robicheau's dance version of "Evangeline" will be told in three acts and six scenes and will be danced by Mr. Robicheau and members of his company. The premiere of this ballet will take place in Jordan Hall Saturday afternoon and evening, April 15.

'EVANGELINE' DANCED BY ROBICHEAU

An Acadian by inheritance, Adolphe Robicheau is innately equipped to reflect the mood and spirit of Longfellow's great epic, "Evangeline," which this well known ballet dancer will present in Jordan Hall the afternoon and evening of March 15. Mr. Robicheau's technique is a product of the French and Italian schools of ballet, thus giving him a wide vocabulary of dance movement. The ballet takes place in three acts and six scenes and is set to the music of Xavier Leroux, the French composer, and with scenery by Richard de Fole.

ROBICHEAU TO PRESENT PREMIERE OF BALLET

Adolphe Robicheau will present the premiere of his ballet pantomime "Evangeline" at Jordan Hall next Saturday afternoon and evening, at 2:30 and 8:30. The ballet is set to music by Xavier Leroux, after an arrangement by Bella Gaffin and Frances Kessler, and the scenery is by Richard de Fole. Mr. Robicheau will dance the part of Gabriel, and Evelyn Ford that of Evangeline; they will be supported by members of Mr. Robicheau's concert group.

"LITTLE PRINCESS" TO HEAD BOWDOIN SQUARE PROGRAM

"The Little Princess" with Shizler anniversary commemorating the expulsion of the French-Acadians from Acadia now Nova Scotia.

Mr. Robicheau who created the ballet after Longfellow's poem on this tragic theme is of French-Acadian ancestry himself. "Evangeline" is mounted in four acts: The Betrothal Evening, Grand Pre Village Scene, The Expulsion and The Bayou Scene in Louisiana. The musical score is by Xavier Leroux, the scenery by De Fole. The ballet was first presented in Jordan Hall, Boston, in 1939.

THE DANCE

ADOLPHE ROBICHEAU

Yesterday afternoon and evening Adolphe Robicheau presented in Jordan Hall his documented ballet-pantomime, "Evangeline." Based on Longfellow's poem, this Acadian ballet was divided into three acts and six scenes. The choreography was by Robicheau, the music by Xavier Leroux and the scenery by Richard de Fole; Robicheau played the role of Gabriel, and Evelyn Ford that of Evangeline.

Poor "Evangeline!" Poor ballet! They both suffered yesterday afternoon in the clutches of a group of incredibly bad dancers. What technique was distinguishable consisted of bad posture, no turned-out position (necessary to a good balletic line), loose choreography and a very sloppy execution. Mr. Robicheau himself can't dance and the posturing (which we think was supposed to pass for dancing) was theatrically most unsound. Of all the performers, Joseph Bastian was certainly the best, for although he is still obviously a beginner, he brings a touch of virility and physical sureness to his role.

There was a narrator who read from Longfellow's poem, there was especially written music by Leroux, and there were several changes of scene. Evidently a great deal of work went into the production, for the sets were fairly elaborate, the lighting was of the intricate school and the costumes were many and colorful. Many of Mr. Robicheau's family heirlooms of the Acadian country brought a touch of authenticity to the occasion. But honestly . . . the dancing was pretty terrible. W. M. T.

Robicheau to Restage His Ballet in Canada

Adolphe Robicheau of Boston will restage his ballet "Evangeline," for Comite des fetes de Grand Pre in Nova Scotia as part of the 200th anniversary commemorating the expulsion of the French-Acadians from Acadia—now Nova Scotia.

Mr. Robicheau, who created the ballet after Longfellow's poem on this tragic theme, is of French-Acadian ancestry himself. "Evangeline" is mounted in four acts: The Betrothal Evening, Grand Pre Village Scene, The Expulsion and the Bayou Scene in Louisiana. The musical score is by Xavier Leroux, and the scenery by De Fole. The ballet was first presented in Jordan Hall, Boston, in 1939.

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